

Katri Rantanen



Breeding Happy and Healthy Chihuahuas



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INTRODUCTION

The Chihuahua is not one of those breeds, which are easily bred with success. Pretty and successful parents do not automatically mean pretty puppies. It does not automatically mean puppies at all. I have been involved with this breed for decades and I still breed Chihuahuas. I have learnt a lot along the way, from many lines of Chihuahuas. I want to share my knowledge with new breeders and even give some key points to senior breeders to possibly unlock problems they might be having in their breeding programs.

I want to share the knowledge I have learnt along the years concerning Chihuahuas and genetics. Many people breeding other breeds have tried to breed Chihuahuas without a success. They easily quit because they consider Chihuahuas to be too challenging for them. I personally did not want to settle for the words "these things happen with Chihuahuas". I studied genetics, biology and statistics. I tried to look for and find information and answers. Especially I wanted to solve some of the problems Chihuahuas have with reproduction. After 30 years, I still breed Chihuahuas and I still desire to help improve this breed to be even better than it now is.

It is important for a breeder to know whether the dog is good or not. A breeder should be able to recognize a good Chihuahua. It is a matter of competition. Good Chihuahuas are valuable, while others may be at their best as pets. One of the problems might be that when a breeder has a good Chihuahua no one tells them. On the other hand, a breeder with poor Chihuahuas, without knowing it may do a lot of harm to the breed. Many problems might be difficult to notice in the early stages. The owner or breeder might get used to this problem, and then it is even more difficult

for them to recognize. Experienced breeders might notice a possible problem sooner than a newbie.

General problems in Chihuahuas are present in many lines, in many different countries, across the world. A problem might also be common in a line of Chihuahuas or just one country. Issues which can be present across the world in Chihuahuas, I have tried to present more specifically. Finland is a cross road to many Chihuahua lines from many different countries and continents. Finland is located in Europe. Chihuahuas living and bred here give a nice sample from the Chihuahuas worldwide. Besides that, many Finnish Chihuahuas present high quality when shown in many other countries as well.

I hope this book offers some keys to breeders to resolve possible issues in their stock and improve Chihuahuas in general. Chihuahuas are a very small and challenging breed to study scientifically. It is not always a necessity to put Chihuahuas through demanding and expensive studies to learn something new. Studies done with other breeds can teach us similar lessons as well as studies from other mammals and humans. Sometimes dogs are used to help human research and sometimes dog breeders might learn from human studies. This is very much the way in Genetics. Things might be similar or not, but there might also be a key to solve a problem with Chihuahuas. An option for a new way of thinking can be the key to resolve a problem in the future.

The Chihuahua breed has developed well and mostly in a positive direction during the last few decades. I hope breeders will find answers to their questions or at least find something to think about. There are still many things to be resolved in the breed for the current breeder generation. Chihuahuas could be even healthier in mind and body than they are nowadays. The breed could also reproduce generally much easier than it does now. Chihuahuas could be the favored breed of the future because of its super temperament, pretty looks, good health and longevity.

Challenges of the breed

The Chihuahua is a very old breed, but there are still many things to improve. Establishing correct size and head shape are probably two major issues in the breed. Improving reproduction and increasing the ease of deliveries, even more in the future, are essential issues with Chihuahuas. Improving temperaments and health in general with good body structure should also not be forgotten.

Breed type, head shape and the size of Chihuahuas vary a lot. These are difficult to regularize, but it should be possible. Breed type often goes along with the size and the head shape. Size may vary tremendously. The tiniest ones may not be suitable for breeding and the biggest ones may not look very much like Chihuahuas at all. One reason might be the extra-large females constantly used for breeding. Head shape may also vary tremendously from a deer type head to the extremely rounded and large heads. Sometimes the head shape of a Chihuahua is not structural, it comes from an illness called hydrocephalus. Puppies from parents with this illness may suffer from the condition in varying degrees. Some of the litter of puppies might have hydrocephalus with extreme head shape while others are normal. The very sick puppies easily die after birth. Naturally, in these cases establishing specific features can be difficult.

Reproduction of Chihuahuas has improved enormously in the past few decades thanks to many skilled breeders, but there is still a lot to improve. Chihuahuas have a possibility for natural reproduction and free whelping lines with a low mortality among the puppies. Definitely, any breeder should not take huge steps backwards with this matter.

Tiny, good-tempered, well-balanced and long living healthy dogs please very many people. Far too many Chihuahuas though still lack some of these qualities which is seen as a problem. Temperaments have improved enormously since the early days of Chihuahuas, but there is still a lot of

work do. Temperament is a challenging quality to improve genetically, because environmental factors do influence it a lot. Good body structure has not been a top priority in many breeding programs so far, because Chihuahuas do not need to be very athletic. Just being a lap dog does not necessarily require extremely good body structure nor extremely good health. Heart problems might be difficult to notice in a Chihuahua who hardly moves at all.

Unequal type, varying size and many head shapes are features for breeders to work with. Improving natural reproduction is still an important matter. Good body structure and health in general are also important issues that help a Chihuahua to gain longevity.

CHI-A-HOLICS

“Chihuahuas are like potato chips, you can’t have just one”

What you need to think about when you have more than just one Chihuahua?

Two to three Chihuahuas is a good number of pets, especially if they are nearly the same age. They then will have a friend to play with and may not end up in a fight that easily. It is easier to keep Chihuahuas of the same sex. You can keep up to around five to ten Chihuahuas without having a separate dog room, if they are house trained and they have easy temperaments. This means that they will not easily fight, are not frightened of outdoors and will happily do their toilet business there. They also need to show low aggressiveness and be smart enough that you can easily train out any problems occurring in the pack. Most enthusiasts, who keep Chihuahuas as pets in their home, keep less than ten at the time. Larger amounts usually require separate doggy rooms to keep order in the house, but sometimes it is practical to have a dog room in the beginning especially if you have two different sexes. You will also have to think how you can feed them individually, if needed. Can you also give them enough attention and happy activities?

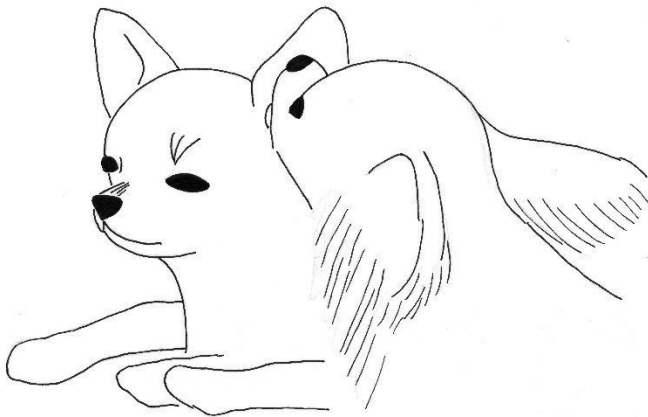
If you are a breeder, you can start being selective only if you have more than just one Chihuahua. If you have only one Chihuahua you will either breed from it or not, based on your own feelings or a vet’s assumptions, but not based on the knowledge of the breed. When you have bunch of

Chihuahuas from different lines, you can really see the differences between individuals and start being selective if needed.

No matter how many Chihuahuas you have, do not keep more than you can take good care of!

When to take another Chihuahua?

Chihuahuas love other Chihuahuas. One Chihuahua might be a best companion and a friend to the owner, but the other Chihuahua is the Chihuahua's best friend. After having one Chihuahua many owners soon take a second one. The best time to take another Chihuahua depends on the first dog and the owner's relationship. All Chihuahuas need separate training and attention and bigger dogs or puppies should not bully a Chihuahua.



Picture: Chihuahua's best friend is usually another Chihuahua

The best timing to get another Chihuahua depends on the first Chihuahua. The first Chihuahua should be well trained and be used to normal things in life before another Chihuahua comes home. It would be better too if the first Chihuahua was completely house broken and it does all their toilet business outside. A dog is the best teacher for another dog. One well-trained dog will teach good habits to a new dog. An untrained dog will teach also bad habits to the new dog. When the first dog is one year old or younger, it will accept new puppy easier than an older dog. This way the pack has possibilities to grow little by little and in harmony.

Two puppies of the same age can be very tempting to have at the same time. They can make best friends, but they may also make worst enemies. It would be good, if the same aged puppies would be the same size, then one will not start bullying the other one. The same aged puppies may have periods of shyness at the same time, which may make it more difficult for them to get back to normal again. They may also need more training than usual. Two same aged puppies may also start fighting excessively time after time, because they go through the same hormonal changes at around the same time. It might be difficult for them to find a balance. It might also be difficult to train two same aged puppies at the same time in the same place at least. Unintentionally one of them may get more attention, training and become smarter than the other one. On the other hand, two nearly same aged puppies love each other, play together and may get along well. They have a possibility to learn doggy language well and will have a happy life together.

A new dog needs training separately from the other Chihuahuas. Another dog is a good companion to a new puppy, but to learn things correctly it needs also training without presence of other dogs. Then the new dog also learns to think on its own. It becomes smarter and it can learn from a human much more than it could learn from a dog.

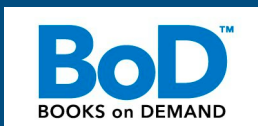
Getting an older dog acquainted with the new puppy is easier to do on neutral territory. It would be best if nearly same sized dogs could run free.

There should not be present any toys, bones or anything else the dogs might protect as their own. It is worth not touching nor talking to any of them until they know each other well. If the dogs are only standing still without making a connection or start growling at each other, it is worth walking around a bit to get them relaxed. The older dog may also need extra attention from time to time without having the puppy around.

It may take a very long time for a Chihuahua to get used to a new puppy, the new puppy is bigger than the Chihuahua. It is the owner's responsibility to make sure the bigger dog will not bully the Chihuahua. A Chihuahua can stress a lot if it cannot live in peace because of a big dog.

Do you want to learn more from the Chihuahua breed? Do you have a problem with your Chihuahua? Do you need practical training tips for a pack of Chihuahuas? Are you planning to breed Chihuahuas or are you already a Chihuahua breeder?

This book offers essential knowledge for all Chihuahua fanciers, owners and breeders. A Chihuahua breeder with 30 years of experience is sharing her knowledge about Chihuahuas. The book includes practical, proven training methods for Chihuahuas as well as essential knowledge for successful breeding programs, with solutions to common problems in breeding.



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